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IWU Student Senate President Takes National Office

August 20, 2013

Brexton Isaacs

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Rising Illinois Wesleyan junior and current Student Senate President Brexton Isaacs, Class of 2015, was elected to the 2013-14 National Executive Board of College Democrats as National Council Vice Chair during the group's conference at the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill, August 3. Under his new title, Isaacs will work with the College Democrats on a national scale by helping chapters and state federations prepare for the 2014 midterm elections. In particular, he will work to start new chapters and state federations in places that are likely to face a competitive congressional, senate or gubernatorial race.

Isaacs will continue to serve as Vice President to the College Democrats of Illinois in the upcoming school year. In Illinois, he will be working to establish new chapters on college campuses that are lacking a College Democrats chapter by traveling to their registered student organization fairs to recruit students to establish new organizations. He will help the group target the Illinois state-wide races, particularly for governor, treasurer and comptroller, as well as the 13th Congressional District where IWU is located. He will also lead the College Democrats in a phone bank at IWU this fall for Virginia gubernatorial candidate Terry McAuliffe, for which Isaacs designed the Students for McAuliffe logo.



Isaacs's double major in political science and business administration was a product of his own self-discovery. He was elected as a leader in the Boy Scouts at a young age and has involved himself in student government since sixth grade, eventually serving as Byron High School's Student Council President.

Isaacs attributes his interest in politics and affiliation with the Democratic Party largely to his experience at a 2009 conference with the Congressional Youth Leadership Council in Washington, D.C. He signed up to attend the event

two years prior to his sophomore year in high school with the understanding that he would be attending the Presidential Inauguration. As it turned out, Isaacs had the opportunity to witness history in the making with President Obama's first inauguration. This, Isaacs said, brought his uncanny love for politics to an all-time high.

"I feel it's important to keep breaking down the societal barriers, whether it be with minority candidates, women candidates, or lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) candidates," Isaacs said. "It's very exciting to be on the forefront of change."

Isaacs met Vice President Joe Biden during the 2012 presidential campaign.



It was also inspiring for Isaacs to witness his favorite politician, Vice President Joe Biden, take office and have the opportunity to personally meet him. He admires Biden for his honest personality and devotion to his family.

This past July, Tori Taylor, then president of the College Democrats of America invited Isaacs to personally meet President Obama. While the president was speaking in Galesburg at Knox College on July 24, Isaacs was given a reserved seat with Governor Pat Quinn, Lt. Governor Sheila Simon, Attorney General Lisa Madigan, Congresswoman Cheri Bustos (Isaacs's employer at the time), Senator Claire McCaskill and White House Press Secretary Jay Carney. Following the President's speech, those in reserved seating were given the opportunity to have a personal meet and greet with President Obama.

Despite his passion for the politics, Isaacs does not consider himself a politician, but rather he prefers more behind-the-scenes work. Since his first job working on the Byron School Board Race in 2011 during high school, Isaacs has found his niche. He has worked on various campaigns throughout the

state, including Congressional races for Congresswoman Bustos (Illinois District 17) and candidate David Gill in 2012 as well as IWU Professor of Political Science and Mayor of Bloomington, Tari Renner's mayoral campaign in 2013.

"I've always enjoyed the fast-paced, always changing side of a campaign," Isaacs said. "In politics, you're never going to have the same day twice."

While serving as Student Senate Treasurer and President of the IWU College Democrats his sophomore year, Isaacs used his campaigning skills to help the College Democrats "Get Out the Vote" in the recent 2012 election. He and many other students chalked sidewalks, put up posters, made over 2,000 phone calls to Bloomington-Normal students and even asked students personally to follow them to the polls at Hansen Student Center. The result was 800 voters – 40 percent of the IWU campus. According to Isaacs, national averages for college campuses generally fall around 25 percent. Thanks to the efforts of passionate students like Isaacs, IWU surpassed both the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Illinois State University in total percentage of student voters and claimed the highest percentage of voter turnout in the state.

In the midst of the 2012 presidential race, Isaacs was running for Student Senate President, making November more hectic than normal for an IWU student – even for someone in politics. He was elected and took office that December. Since then, he has finalized the Student Senate Capitol Development Project for the Hansen Student Center, which added a new lounge near Hattie's Coffee Shop, a new sound and lighting system, new high-top chairs and tables, a refurbished television lounge and a taller stage area for better visibility.

In light of this project, Isaacs said, "I'm inspired by the ongoing process of seeing students realize that this is their campus and that they must become empowered to do things to enhance it."

Isaacs feels that it's important to commit to learning transferable skills inside and outside of politics. In addition to his political positions, he is a resident assistant in Dodds Hall, a Titan Orientation Leader and a brother in the professional business fraternity Alpha Kappa Psi.

During the school year, Isaacs often finds himself staying in most nights and weekends to accomplish the many tasks necessary to fulfill his duties and to complete his schoolwork. When he does find time for fun, he enjoys going to see horror movies and playing Risk with his friends. Nevertheless, Isaacs finds fulfillment in his busy schedule.

"It's a rewarding experience," he said. "I find that my friends are often people I work with. Going to a Student Senate meeting might be work, but it's also a social experience for me."

When he graduates in May 2015, Isaacs looks forward to joining a campaign for the 2016 elections. He particularly enjoys working for strong female candidates and would love to have the opportunity to support such a candidate in the next election.

As he passes on his Student Senate President title in December, Isaacs will study at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. for the spring semester. He hopes to leave an impression on IWU students to remember that people matter. He believes that Americans should strive to make sure that everyone has a quality life, and that those basic necessities like healthcare and education will never be considered unattainable luxuries for anyone who is willing to work for them.

"I'm most passionate about making things better for other people," said Isaacs.

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